

## **Russia and the Soviet Union in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

### Alexander II (1855 – 1881) – “THE REFORMER”

- Recognized the major issue of serfdom and the problems it created
- 1861 (when the U.S. was beginning the Civil War) Alexander emancipated the serfs; however, the serfs had to “buy” their freedom by paying back their former masters
- Serfs were given tracts of land that was not good for farming and this would lead to further problems
- ZEMSTVOS – were local assemblies that dealt with local mandates, such as education and social services; they were dominated by nobles, so they were not very liberal-minded
- Revised the legal system to administer justice fairly to all classes
- Reformed military to allow all enlisted to rise to officer status if merit warranted it
- Alexander was not open to reforms such as a constitutional monarchy, but was planning on introducing a plan for a representative assembly, but was assassinated the night prior to its issuance (his death had nothing to do with his plans to have a representative assembly)
- Alexander’s reforms (although conservative by European standards of the day) led to the rise of political organizations that demanded more rights – The People’s Will was one such organization and in 1881 a member of this group assassinated Alexander II

### Alexander III (1881-1894)

- Blamed reforms for his father’s death and vowed to revoke them
- Policy was one of, “orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationalism”
- Repression of ideas and the rise of radical groups, especially socialists
- Repression against Jews and any others who were not members of the Russian Orthodox Church
- Policy of Russification to get minorities to become “Russian;” this included areas controlled by Russia – parts of Germany, Poland, and Finland
- Alexander survived several assassination plots, including one planned by V.I. Lenin’s older brother

### Rise of Socialism in Russia

- The Russian Social Democrats and the Russian Social Revolutionaries were two very small groups that advocated a revolution based on the concepts of socialism.
- Generally socialists advocate a democratically controlled economy run for the benefit of all. Capitalism is replaced by cooperation and the business cycle by planned stability. Often they believe that property should be shared in common, and private ownership of industry and land abolished.
- The ideas of Marx were inspirational; however, Marx believed in a “scientific socialism” that would emerge naturally through an evolution of economics. One of his major ideas was that eventually the workers (in an industrial economy) would rise up against the owners and the workers would lead a temporary dictatorship – DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT.
- These early socialist groups would eventually evolve into the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. The Bolsheviks believed in helping the revolution along by calling for an immediate revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat while the Mensheviks believed in waiting for the natural cycle to emerge. Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin) was the leader of the Bolsheviks.
- The Socialists received little public support until the great depression of 1899 and the humiliation and great loss of life suffered by Russia during the war with Japan (1904-1905).

### Nicholas II (1894 – 1917)

- Very incompetent ruler; chose advisors poorly and was totally out of touch
- Poor economic policies and bread crises along with Russo-Japanese War led to a revolt in 1905
- The revolt was NOT led by socialists, but rather by a priest (Gapon)
- January 9, 1905 – Gapon marched to St. Petersburg to present the Tzar with a list of grievances; troops fired on the marches and about 100 people died – this event is known as BLOODY SUNDAY

- Bloody Sunday was followed by strikes and peasant revolts
- October, 1905 as a result of the economy and the Russo-Japanese War, Nicholas issued the October Manifesto
- The October Manifesto called for a Duma (legislature), civil liberties (freedom of speech, assembly, and the press) and plans to reorganize the government
- The Duma was called in 1906, but never was successful because of internal fighting

### World War I

- There were four long-term causes of World War I: 1) Nationalism; 2) Imperialism; 3) Militarism; 4) Alliance System
- Of these, nationalism and the alliance system were the primary factors that led to Russia entering World War I
- Russians are the largest group of Slavs in the world; this makes the Russians related to the Serbs (another Slavic group); Russian intervenes numerous times in the Balkan Crises in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as the Slavic peoples of the Balkans have problems with the Ottoman and Austrian Empire
- Tensions between Austria and Russia had led Austria to seek an alliance with Germany; France and Russia form their own alliance in 1892 and Great Britain joined the alliance (Entente) in 1904
- June 28, 1914 – the heir to the Austrian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by Princip, a Serbian member of the Black Hand; Austria blames Serbia for not warning Austria of the plan (Serbia didn't know the details to warn them); when Austria makes demands on Serbia and Serbia refuses, Austria declares war on Serbia; Russia responds by mobilizing for war against Austria (mobilizing is an act of war); soon Germany, France, and Great Britain join in the fun for World War I
- The Germans main concern was fighting a two front war, so they propose the Schlieffen Plan whereby France would quickly be defeated and Germany could focus on fighting Russia on the Eastern Front; the plan doesn't work – it only leads Great Britain to enter the war
- August, 1914 Russia invaded Prussia and Galicia; the Russians quickly had a major defeat at Tennenberg (90,000 troops surrendered to the Germans); the Russians held their own in Galicia and Poland, but when General Hindenburg took over the German forces, Russia was defeated again
- In 1915, Russia lost most of its territory in Poland and the Baltics; Tzar Nicholas takes over command and his wife is left behind to run the country with freaks like Rasputin advising
- In 1916, Russia lost 500,000 men in the Brusilov Offensive; about another 500,000 were captured; Rasputin is killed by members of the Romanov family
- The draft increased Russian forces from 1,350,000 to 6.5 million and then to 12 million, but about ¼ of them never received any weapons; the large; 1.7 million died with millions more seriously wounded; 76% of all Russian soldiers met some drastic end (death, dismemberment; missing in action, and captured)

### The March and November Revolutions

- As a result of strikes, food shortages, and the massive outrage over World War I, Tzar Nicholas II abdicated in March (February on the old Russian calendar) of 1917
- The government was replaced by the PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT led by Kerensky – a socialist, but a very moderate one
- The Provisional Government sought reforms, but remained in WWI
- The Germans wanted to find a way to get the Russians out of the war so that they could focus on the Western Front, so in April the Germans helped sneak Lenin into Russia (Lenin had been in exile in Switzerland)
- The workers in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) were forming committees (cross between a labor union and city council) called SOVIETS
- The Soviets had to ensure public safety in some cities as more protests emerged
- By November (October under the Russian calendar) of 1917, Lenin had escaped to Finland (after a massive arrest wave) and the Bolsheviks were being led by Leon Trotsky under the promise of “peace, land, and bread”

- Trotsky arranged for Bolsheviks to take over power stations, railroads, and communication centers; in a matter of ten days, the Provisional Government collapsed, Lenin returned to Russia, and the Socialist had seized control of Russia
- Lenin began to negotiate to end Russia's role in the war; the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk removed Russia from war and required Russia to give up claims to the Baltic states and Poland

#### Russian Civil War

- In the elections in November, the Bolsheviks expected to win big at the elections; however, that didn't happen, so the Bolsheviks chose to seize power
- From 1917 to 1920 the Bolsheviks (who took the name COMMUNISTS in 1919 and the Mensheviks fought a bloody Civil War (Reds vs. the Whites)
- The Allies tried to help the Whites so that they would re-enter WWI; but they weren't really any help
- Lenin and Trotsky launched "Red Terror" against the Mensheviks
- Ultimately Stalin joined Lenin and Trotsky and together they orchestrated the victory of the Communists

#### Comintern/Third International

- Lenin and Trotsky fully expected the Russian Revolution to lead to massive revolutions throughout Europe and ultimately the world so they formed the Third International (also known as Comintern) to unite all the world's communists/socialists
- Russia believed that they should ultimately lead all the world communists/socialists and this led to Russia and the Soviet Union to assert their role in an international movement for the next 70 years

#### New Economic Plan

- Lenin's initial economic plan of immediate socialism (war communism) was not successful, so Lenin began a program of half socialism and half small-scale capitalism called NEP
- The program was successful, but some viewed Lenin's plan as an attack on socialism
- 1924 Lenin died and two possible successors emerged: Trotsky who wanted to end NEP and Bukharin who supported continuing the NEP; while these two men were wrangling for control, Stalin seized power

#### Joseph Stalin (1879-1953)

- Stalin worked with Bukharin to get rid of Trotsky, then he got rid of Bukharin
- 1936 Stalin began a series of "trials" where former opponents confessed to all sorts of crimes against the state; this began the first of several "Purges" that would occur under Stalin
- During this time, 10 million Russians were arrested as "enemies of the state" and most were either killed or sent to camps or Siberia
- Trotsky had escaped Russia, but in 1940 Stalin assassins would hunt him down in Mexico
- Stalin ended the NEP and began the first on many FIVE YEAR PLANS
- The first Five Year Plan called for collectivization of farms with the plan being to use surplus crops to pay for industrialization
- Kulaks – wealthy, landowning peasants – opposed the loss of land and often killed their own livestock and sabotaged crops to undermine the state; Stalin had millions of Kulaks shot and others were intentionally starved to death
- In 1931 the Vienna banking system crashed (victims of the world wide Great Depression) and other banks began to fail; this affected Russia (now the Soviet Union) and her ability to import resources
- Stalin continued with Five Year Plans and at the cost of starving millions of people by selling crops that Russians needed to eat to the world, Stalin was able to make the Soviet Union the third strongest industrial economy in the world

## World War II

- Stalin did not have the weapons or the leadership (he killed most of his military leaders during a purge) so he wanted to avoid getting in the way of his aggressive neighbor – Hitler
- August 22, 1939 – Stalin and Hitler sign a Non-Aggression Pact where they pledge not to fight each other; other parts of the plan was that Stalin and Hitler could divide Poland and Stalin could reclaim land given up at the end of WWI – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland
- While Europe got caught up in WWII, Stalin focused on industrialization and purging enemies
- June 22, 1941 – Hitler, for reasons still unclear – decided to invade the Soviet Union – Operation Barbarossa; Stalin was unprepared and really mad that Hitler had LIED TO HIM
- 1942 Hitler had cut off Leningrad (St. Petersburg) from supply lines (1 million would starve to death) and he set his sights on Stalingrad; this was a personal battle for Stalin; the siege would last six months and would cost 500,000 soldiers and civilians (many “civilians” picked up weapons and fought alongside the official soldiers) but ultimately the Germans would be defeated at Stalingrad
- Soviet troops went on the offensive in Poland and were successful against the Germans
- The Soviets pretty much fought the eastern front alone
- June 6, 1944 the Allies launched D-Day and the Germans were soon retreating on all fronts
- The American, British, and Soviet armies meet outside of Berlin and the decision is made that the Soviets were enter Berlin first – May, 1945 Germany surrenders (May 8<sup>th</sup>)
- The Soviet Union declared war on Japan and prepared to fight in the Pacific, but the U.S. drops the atomic bombs and ends the needs for Soviet help (August, 1945)
- The Soviets lost at least 20 million people as a direct result of WWII; the number goes to 25 million when numbers of people who died the year after the war ended (nutrition, disease, etc.) is added; another 25 million Soviets were made homeless by WWII

## Major Conferences for the Big Three

- These conferences made all the plans for a post – WWII Europe – no separate treaty was ever signed with Germany; treaties were signed however with Japan, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria
- Casablanca – Churchill and Roosevelt decide on an unconditional surrender for Germany; Stalin not there, but was supportive of the conference
- Teheran Conference – November 1943 – plans for Operation Overload – D-Day – are made; Stalin wants it to happen sooner so that he can get help on the eastern front; however, it won’t happen until 1944; Stalin agrees to declare war against Japan
- Yalta Conference – February, 1945 –Germany would be divided into zones that would be administered by the allies; Berlin would be divided and administered by the allies; and all land “liberated” by the Soviet Union would remain under its “sphere of influence” this would include Poland south to the Balkans – would become the “Iron Curtain”
- Potsdam Conference – July, 1945; Roosevelt has died, so Truman has replaced Roosevelt and Churchill loses election and he is replaced by Attlee; Stalin is the veteran here and he insists on keeping the arrangements made at Yalta; Truman receives word of the successful experiments with the atomic bomb, but keeps it TOP SECRET
- 1945 – San Francisco Conference – supports the Atlantic Charter that was created in 1941 and that set up the United Nations

## The Cold War Begins

- Unlike previous conflicts, not a direct military confrontation, although wars were fought in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and elsewhere as part of this conflict.
- Development of nuclear weapons made direct confrontation virtually unthinkable.
- Instead the conflict was mostly fought with diplomacy, propaganda, espionage, and irregular wars in the former colonial world.

#### United States.

- In 1945, the U. S. militarily and economically the most powerful nation in the world.
- Suffered 500,000 combat deaths and many other casualties, but land was not physically destroyed
- The United States armed forces in 1945 included the largest navy and the most well supplied army and air corps in the world; had control of the atomic bomb, the most powerful strategic arm in the world, but the armed forces were reduced from 13 million to 1.5 million
- The United States Economy: 43% of world's electricity in 1947; 57% of world's steel in 1947. ; 63% of world's oil in 1947; the highest share of the world's total economy held by one country in history; Part of the reason for this was that the economies of most of the other major powers were in a shambles due to the war.

#### Soviet Union

- It suffered most losses during the war
- Tremendous military and economic capacity.
- Much of the heaviest fighting in World War II occurred on Soviet soil including many towns, villages, industries, transportation facilities, farms destroyed.
- It continued to maintain the largest standing army in the World.
- Because of the losses of the war, the Soviets occupied and eventually integrated much of Eastern Europe as "allies".
- To serve as a buffer zone and an area of economic interest.
- To extend the Communist system beyond the borders of the Soviet Union.

#### The United Nations

- The San Francisco International Conference of April-June 1945 formulated a charter for the United Nations
- the first member nations (51 in all) agreed use this new organization "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind."
- General Assembly -- The main representative body; to meet annually to address general problems, pass resolutions, and vote on the entry of new members; every member nation is represented in this body, today the member nations number nearly 200.
- Security Council -- to function year round and was to act in dealing with international problems and emergencies that would need immediate action; representatives of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, China, France were to serve as permanent members of the council and any one member can VETO any action
- Many other components include: the International Court of Justice at the Hague, UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Recovery Agency), UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), WHO (World Health Organization)
- The United Nations was not able to settle the disputes between the East and the West

#### Nuclear Threats

- Use in World War II: At Hiroshima and Nagasaki, just two of these Atomic Bombs killed over 120,000 people.
- Soviet-American Rivalry develops and Soviets began a crash program to have their own atomic bomb; tested the first Soviet atomic bomb tested in Siberia in 1949; Since both superpowers had the bomb, brought about "a balance of terror."